



Education Watch

Enhancing Flexibility & Accountability ■ Leaving No Child Behind

U.S. House Education & the Workforce Committee ■ John Boehner, Chairman
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Reading First Initiative Focuses on Proven Methods of Success

President Bush's Reading First initiative is aimed at ensuring that every child can read by the third grade. H.R. 1 awards grants to states that establish comprehensive reading programs. The bill authorizes an extra \$600 million for reading programs -- tripling federal literacy funding from the present \$300 million to \$900 million in 2002.

The Reading First initiative gives states both the funds and the tools they need to eliminate the reading deficit. The National Reading Panel issued a report in April 2000 after reviewing 100,000 studies on how students learn to read. The panel concluded:

"...effective reading instruction includes teaching children to break apart and manipulate the sounds in words (phonemic awareness), teaching them that these sounds are represented by letters of the alphabet which can then be blended together to form words (phonics), having them practice what they have learned by reading aloud with guidance and feedback (guided oral reading), and applying reading comprehension strategies to guide and improve reading comprehension."

The Reading First initiative builds upon these findings by investing in scientifically based reading instruction programs in the early grades. By funding effective reading instruction programs, H.R. 1 ensures that more children will receive the help they need before they fall too far behind.

Message of the Day

A child's success in school -- and indeed life -- is dependent upon his or her ability to read.

- ❑ *Research continues to show that reading failure has devastating consequences on self-esteem, social development, and opportunities for advanced education and meaningful employment.*
- ❑ *Students best learn through explicit, systematic phonics instruction, vocabulary development, quality literature, and comprehension strategies that provide reading practice.*
- ❑ *The President's plan focuses on effective, proven methods of reading instruction based on scientific research.*

DAILY EDUCATION FACTS

- According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, 38 percent of fourth graders cannot read at a basic level -- that is, they cannot read and understand a short paragraph that one would find in a simple children's book.
- Moreover, reading failure disproportionately affects children who live in poverty.
- According to the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), nearly 70 percent of fourth-graders in low-income urban school districts cannot read at a proficient level.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Students [with reading difficulties] who have stayed in school long enough to reach high school tell us they hate to read because it is so difficult and it makes them feel 'dumb.' As a high school junior in one of our studies remarked, 'I would rather have a root canal than read.'" **Dr. Reid Lyon, National Institutes of Health, March 8, 2001, testimony before the House Education & the Workforce Committee**